

under the plenary powers, and that the decision so taken, being the decision of the International Commission, is truly recorded in the present Opinion No. 625.

N. D. RILEY
Secretary

W. E. CHINA
Assistant Secretary
London
23 October 1961

International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED PRESERVATION OF THE NAME *CERASTES*
FOR THE SAND VIPERS. Z.N.(S.) 724

(see volume 18, pages 170-171 and 315)

By Hobart M. Smith (*Professor of Zoology, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, U.S.A.*)

The generic name *Aspis* has been used occasionally in recent years by specialists aware of its claim to acceptance in lieu of *Cerastes* for the sand vipers. However, a review of the entries in the Zoological Record since 1936, when Stejneger proposed replacement of *Cerastes* by *Aspis*, reveals that at least three-quarters of the references to this genus continued to fall under the name *Cerastes*. This fact, coupled with the abundance of pre-1936 literature under the sole heading of *Cerastes*, and the general biological importance of the genus, make it clearly in the interest of nomenclatural stability to preserve the name *Cerastes* for the sand vipers.

By Robert Mertens and Konrad Klemmer (*Natur-Museum und Forschungs-Institut Senckenberg, Frankfurt am Main, Germany*)

The original proposal to suppress the generic name *Cerastes* Laurenti, 1768, by Schmidt, Pope and Loveridge has completely been changed due to the amendment published by W. E. China. He proposes the validation of the generic name *Cerastes* Laurenti (1768, *Synopsis Reptilium*: 81) with *Coluber cerastes* Linnaeus, 1758, as type-species, a nominal species not originally included in the genus *Cerastes*. Our first comment (Mertens, see volume 18, page 354) by this amendment is out of context.

2. After having studied again all the problems involved, we now conclude that the suggested validation of *Cerastes* Laurenti, in order to retain this name for the North African and Arabian sand vipers, in the best solution to the case. By strict application of the Rules the deplorable designation of *Coluber rhombeatus* Linnaeus, 1758, by Fejérváry (1923, *Zool. Anz.* 56 : 172) as type-species, would make unavailable the name *Cerastes* for the genus of viperid snakes, and, on the other hand, *Aspis* Laurenti (1768, *Synopsis Reptilium*: 105) cannot be used. Stejneger (1922, *Nyt Mag. Naturvid.* 60 : 83) was wrong in suggesting that the type-species of *Aspis* is, by Linnean tautonymy, *Aspis cleopatrae* Laurenti, 1768. The reference to the pre-Linnean name "Aspida" of Lucanus in the synonymy of *cleopatrae* does not satisfy the provisions of the Code [Art. 68d(i)], as there is not identity but similarity with the newly established genus name. Thus the designation as type-species of *Aspis intestinalis* Laurenti, 1768, by Barbour (1914, *Proc. New England zool. Club* 5 : 92), is to be regarded as the first valid type-designation. By this designation *Aspis* would become a senior subjective synonym of the well-known generic name *Maticora* Gray (1834, *Illustr. ind. Zool.* 2 : plate 86), for the Indian coral-snakes of the family Elapidae. On the other hand, the earliest name available for the genus of sand vipers would be *Gonyechis* Fitzinger (1843, *Systema Reptilium*: 28).

3. These multiple changes which, by strict application of the Code, would be the result of the nomenclatorial circumstances mentioned above, would lead to the greatest confusion. Therefore, in addition to the amendment made by W. E. China, we strongly recommend the International Commission to use its plenary powers in order to suppress the generic name *Aspis* Laurenti, 1768, with *Aspis intestinalis* Laurenti, 1768, as type-species, by subsequent designation by Barbour, 1914, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not of the Law of Homonymy, as proposed by Schmidt, Pope and Loveridge in their first application.